

ABSTRACT

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PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON A
COMMUNITY CHILDREN'S CHORUS

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The purpose of this study was to gain insight into parent perspectives of a community children's chorus. The research questions were aimed at exploring the goals and expected outcomes of a community children's chorus and to determine the alignment of parent perspectives with these goals. They also sought to explore the alignment of parent perspectives with the artistic processes of the National Core Arts Standards (NCAS); as well as gain an understanding of what were the important aspects that parents wanted their child(ren) to experience in a community children's chorus. This research also sought to investigate any differences that may exist among musician and non-musician parents with regard to their responses.

PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON A COMMUNITY CHILDREN'S CHORUS

by

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Community children's choruses provide an opportunity for young singers to gain or enhance their choral music education. These choruses play a significant role in training future professional singers, choristers, and music educators by providing musical opportunities through the choral experience (Sugden, 2005). In the wake of diminishing music programs in elementary schools, "the energy of the children's choir movement in American communities has become a cultural phenomenon" (Rao, 1993, p.44). Rao (1993) notes the rise in popularity of children's choruses since 1983 as a response to the demise of choral singing in school music programs. Even in communities where choral singing in music programs have been maintained, community children's choruses provide an extension to children's choral experiences usually providing more performance opportunities and a more nuanced choral experience.

Today, many children's choruses function as non-profit organizations whose missions vary but usually focus on providing numerous performance opportunities as well as exploring challenging and varied repertoire. The perspectives of the chorus' choral educators may be influenced by several factors such as their own experiences, education level, state and national music standards to name a few. Their perspectives ultimately shape the chorus' program and curriculum as they seek to provide a fulfilling choral experience for its participants, children.

While the mission statements of community children's choruses vary choral educators will indubitably set very similar objectives. Undoubtedly, a choral educators' objectives for a community children's chorus will align with many of the broader goals of music education. This is to say, choral educators advocate for music education in general and firmly believe that it should be part of every child's education. A children's chorus experience satisfies this objective by being one of the main ensemble experiences within music education. Beyond the consensus

that every child should be afforded such musical experiences, children's choruses' choral educators may differ in their philosophical views of music. Music is commonly viewed as either having a purely utilitarian function (e.g., workforce skills or other skills that extend beyond the musical setting) or as being part of an artistic and aesthetic experiences (Logsdon, 2013; Sugden, 2005). Many arts education advocates have previously relied on promoting music and musical experiences for many proclaimed utilitarian or academic benefits. However, with recent studies increasingly refuting any causal relationships between music and these proposed benefits (e.g., improved academic abilities, likelihood of getting into college), many music advocates have realigned to the aesthetic experience approach, which promotes art for the sake of art (Logsdon, 2013). Whichever perspective appeals to the choral educators ultimately determines how the choral program is designed.

The National Core Arts Standards (NCAS) provide music educators with a detailed list musical and musically related objectives that help to guide their curricula and instruction (Overview of 2014 Music Standards, n.d.). The NCAS are structured into four artistic processes: creating, performing, responding, and connecting. These overarching processes encourage educators to consider a broader range of experiences that can be granted to students other than just performing. Although NCAS was created mainly with music educators in K-12 settings in mind, the objectives are very broad and can be used and applied to other musical settings. In the case of a community children's chorus, this framework can be used to help shape its choral curriculum. In cases where a community children's choral organization functions as the only source of music education, the inclusion of the NCAS processes would be crucial to strive for a well-balanced musical experience. It is reasonably understood that many choral curricular approaches are very heavily centered around performance and other objectives that enable music

literacy. Authors and choral educators, Steven Demorest and John B. Hylton discuss in their books, 'Building Choral Excellence' and 'Comprehensive Choral Music Education' respectively, that the choral curriculum should extend beyond solely performance objectives. Whilst is expected that performance objectives top the list in terms of priority and expectation of a community children's chorus experience, the other NCAS artistic processes may not align similarly between educators and parents.

Children's perspectives are also heavily considered in choral programs as they are the recipients of what a children's chorus program seeks to offer. It seems unlikely that a child, solely on their own volition, would be able to actively seek out and attend children's chorus. This brings to light to the intermediary who serves as a linkage between a children's chorus and the children – parents. Parents may not readily be thought of as participant in the choral experience but particularly in the case of community children's choruses they hold a unique position and perspective. They participate by playing an active role in supporting their child(ren) throughout the choral experience. Many parents have to make an equal commitment toward attending rehearsals, concerts, performance events etc. and therefore come with or gradually develop their own expectations, priorities and overall perspectives on the choral experience. It is, perhaps, more likely that a child would express an interest in or demonstrate considerable talent in singing from which a parent is triggered to seek out opportunities to help their child(ren) develop their skills. Parents are in this unique position and their perspectives weigh heavily on whether or not they allow their child(ren) to participate and determining the actual chorus they enroll their child(ren) in (Bartolome, 2013; Creech, 2010; Sichivitsa, 2007). Parents are the ones who assess the musical opportunities and experiences proposed by a choral organization and evaluate whether it adequately supports their child(ren)'s musical growth and development. They hold the

ultimate decision on whether or not they enroll their child(ren) in a community children's chorus. Beyond their decision to enroll, parents often take an active role in supporting their child(ren) throughout the choral experience (e.g., commuting to and attending rehearsals, concerts, etc.) and actively support the choral organization through serving on parent or other committees and/or board of directors. The link they provide between their child(ren) and the chorus should be considered a sizeable cog in the mechanism that allows a community children's chorus to function and carry out its mission.

There is an increasing number of resources available to guide choral educators and inform their perspectives toward creating successful community children's chorus program (Bell, 2008). Some research explores community children's choral experiences with a vested interest toward understanding students' perceptions of the choral experiences (Bartolome, 2013). Beyond this, there is a void of inquiry that seeks to investigate and understand the perspectives of parents in community children's choruses. The absence of this perspective invites inquiry into the alignment of perspectives of choral educators and parents. Misalignment of the children's chorus' proposed goals and the expectations of parents could explain an aspect that contributes to the shortcomings of a choral program. On the other hand, the alignment or working toward the alignment of the objectives among all parties can indicate the strength of a choral program or the knowledge and insight gained could be used to strengthen choral programs.

The demographic profile of a community chorus helps us to better understand these types of organizations. As we consider many perspectives, they may vary based on a number of factors for example, socioeconomic status, education level of parents, public or private schooling, etc. The demographic profile not only allows us to understand who is interested in these musical experiences and how to improve them, but should also prompt us to ask, who missing from these

experiences?’ or ‘who are we excluding?’. Barriers to access are usually unintentional but are quite easily overlooked. As we gain insight and consider perspectives, we ought to evaluate them and make changes toward the better but also ensure that we are not emboldening or creating other barriers to access.

Through this study I hope to provide some insight into a viewpoint that has been absent or neglected when considering the perspectives that surround a community children’s chorus. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to gain insight into parent perspectives of a community children’s chorus. My inquiry was guided by these questions:

1. What are the publicly stated goals and expected outcomes of a community children's chorus organization?
2. Do parents' perspectives align with the chorus’ publicly stated goals and expected outcomes?
3. Do parents' perspectives align with the four artistic processes of the National Core Arts Standards?
4. What are some of the more important experiences that parents value of their child(ren)’s experience in a community children’s chorus?
5. What if any differences exist among musician and non-musician parents?

These findings may provide insight on the alignment of priorities and expectations between the administrators of a community children’s chorus and parents. The direct implications of this research may be limited to the choral organization(s) that is/are surveyed; however, it adds to our understanding of possible successes and shortcomings of similar choral organizations and their goals, expected outcomes and by extension curricular structure and programming. The

knowledge gained may allow other community children's choruses to either gain confidence in their existing model or work toward attuning their program and curricular objectives.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Definition of community chorus

Bell (2008) questions the need for a definition of ‘community choir’ through the understanding that definitions can be confining and limit but understands that they offer clarity.

Rather than a single definition, Bell (2008) provides a list of attributes:

- Small ensemble of very skilled performers who, although not making their living through the group are truly ‘professional’ in every sense of the word
- Choruses of various sizes whose membership may include [a variety of people with regard to age and other social attributes]
- Large, institutionally sponsored or supported choirs
- Small, non-auditioned groups which meet more or less regularly and perform as the need arises (p. 230)

Bell (2008) thoroughly explores these descriptions but is unable to find any consensus on what, exactly, is meant by a community chorus. The discussion continues but explores aspects such as whether they include auditions, the skill level of the singers, the type of repertoire chosen, the sociodemographic aspects of the community, etc. Overall, the understanding that communities are dynamic makes it hard to converge on a single comprehensive statement. Withing the understanding that a community choirs demographics can vary, a potential definition of what a community children’s chorus is would only add some level of specificity by limiting the involvement to young school-aged singers.

Community children’s choruses

Community children’s choruses are a significant part of music education in America. Rao (1993) connects these choruses back to the early singing schools the 18th century. Despite this

long history of choral singing, the journey has not been without challenge. According to Rao (1993),

It is safe to say, though embarrassing to admit, that the tradition of song-based music education and the opportunity for choral singing have been lost to an entire generation of American children in the second half of the twentieth century. In response to the demise of choral singing in elementary school music programs, the momentum and energy of the children's choir movement in American communities has become a cultural phenomenon. By 1983, a revolution of children's choirs was born" (p.44).

She encourages the view that choral singing beyond a mere extracurricular activity and that music performance is valuable beyond the stage, employing benefits to one's psyche such as experiencing enjoyment and increased self-esteem. Rao (1993) suggests that the overall aim of choral singing should be to achieve self-growth and enjoyment and that this should serve the whole person beyond their time in a chorus. She describes musical enjoyment as being able to overcome musical challenges found in the repertoire by developing one's musicianship that enables us to do it. The basis of the choral curriculum, then, is based on the development of musicianship and the opportunity for enjoyment and self-growth. Rehearsals are constructed to promote the holistic development of the young choristers as they overcome the inherent musical challenges derived from the repertoire. The holistic approach features a 'production-practice-perform' model which starts with the music itself and then develops the skills and understandings necessary to meet the musical challenges vested in the musical literature. The production segment is described as – where students engage in a meaningful form of 'musical doing'. The practice segment concentrates on musical development. Lastly, in the performance segment students apply their musicianship to a musical work. In addition to this model, Rao

offers an overall perspective to choral educators which is to view all children as having a natural ability and desire to learn. Choral educators, with the understanding that students differ in skill, confidence, motivations etc., should be given a variety of opportunities involving working independently, in small groups, and in musically skilled and confident ways that allow students to enjoy singing motivated by community spirit and group effort. Overall, Rao implores community children's choruses to employ a robust and dynamic interaction between both students and choral educators as a democratic ideal toward choral excellence.

Choral singing must return to the heart of American music education. That is where it began in the eighteenth century – that is where it belongs today. (Rao, 1993, p.48)

Goals and aims of community children's choruses

Tagg (1993) lauds the work of Doreen Rao and further discusses the progress and goals of the children's movement. "The promotion of healthy singing and attention to quality repertoire within the context of sound educational principles is our goal" (Tagg, 1993, p.7). From 1981 to the time of her writing, she describes numerous conventions and conferences that explored many aspects of children's singing. In 1989, as part of the American Choral Director's Association (ACDA), the National Committee on Children's Chorus adopted the theme, 'Children's choirs –the Future'. With this came the premise, "that children who are introduced to the great choral works as young singers will continue to enjoy music for its own sake throughout their lives" (Tagg, 1993, p.9). Additionally, choral exchanges between American and foreign children's choruses were highlighted as an opportunity to foster understanding of performance practices of other cultures. The committee envisioned many goals for children's choruses such as: to promote the performance of the finest choral literature; to provide the best music education experiences; and to serve communities in order enhance the lives of people.

The year 1993 seems to be an active period for choral educators as Elliot (1993) also adds to our knowledge of the growth and progress of community children's choruses. His writing projects the broader view of choral music education but nonetheless community children's choruses exist within this realm and undoubtedly are influenced by these thoughts. He echoes a concept from Donald Schon who describes singing done well as a form of 'thinking-in-action' and 'knowing-in-action'. It states that, "in choral singing, one's musical knowledge is not manifested verbally but practically: it is manifested in one's singing itself" (Elliot, 1993, p.11). The notion of 'thinking-in-action' is a kind of formal knowledge that presents itself in the quality of their performance, which reflects the quality of one's musical thinking and knowing. 'Knowing-in-action' refers to procedural knowledge like being able to sing musically or demonstrate a rich form of musicianship. At a halfway point between formal and procedural knowledge is 'informal knowledge'. "It represents what the truly musical performer takes to be obvious about music making" (Elliot, 1993, p.13). Informal knowledge seems to hint at an understanding of the nuances of a performance, perhaps more modernly described as having X-factor. It is linked to having a multifaceted understanding of the music which contributes to a nuanced performance. Elliot contributes to aims set for all areas of choral music education. In addition to performance goals, he calls increased artistry, authenticity, and cultural understanding. Broadly, he encourages choruses to expand their horizons not only in terms of repertoire but finding a balance between musical challenges and increase musicianship as a model for optimal musical enjoyment and self-growth.

The choral experience

The ethnographic study of Kennedy (2009) allows for a deeper understanding of the choral experience of community choruses. A community chorus can represent various aspects of

a community or choose to celebrate or provide a place for a particular faction of society. In this way, a community chorus' objectives align to further develop the identity and strengthen bonds amongst a community along the commonalities of their identity. Whilst a community children's chorus is not specified in this study, the understandings gained easily translate to many other types of choral experiences. Kennedy (2009) explores the success of a community choral organization whose director aimed to form an inclusive choir with an open membership policy for the sole purpose, to sing for the joy of singing. The result of her inquiry revealed a variety of reasons why people were drawn to the choir:

- Attended a previous concert and found it enjoyable
- Recommended by a friend who was already a member
- New to the area and seeking community
- Just loved to sing

The literature contains numerous studies surrounding the benefits of the choir or the choral experience (Adderley et al., 2003; Bartolome, 2013; Elliott, 1993; Hylton, 1981; Kennedy, 2002; Kwan, 2002; Rao, 1993; Sugden, 2005). Kennedy (2009), however, presents a unique insight into 'why some folks leave the choir'. She explains some of the main reasons why members left; this was largely due to:

- Ensemble size – being too large
- Length of rehearsal – being too long
- Dislike of the chosen repertoire
- Lack of member input on choosing repertoire

A community choir, in general, provides a musical setting for both experienced and amateur singers to either gain a choral experience or broaden their choral experiences. Reports and research on community-based choral singing are usually positive.

Students' perspectives

Community-based youth choir programs have continued to fulfill the roll of providing an opportunity for music participation outside of school programs. The children's choir movement describes a period of growth of choral programs that rose up due to the demise of choral singing in elementary school music programs (Bartolome, 2013; Rao, 1993). In the literature, many themes, dimensions, and categories have been discussed that surround student perceptions on the value of or motivations to take part in the choral experience. Hylton (1981) identified six categories related to the value students place on their choral experience: achievement, spiritualistic, musical-artistic, communicative, psychological, and integrative. Kennedy (2002) presents four themes regarding students' motivation to join and remain involved: skill, knowledge, and attitude acquisition; issues of repertoire; and participant perceptions of the choral culture. Additionally, Adderley et al. (2003) as cited by Bartolome (2013) suggested that participants were nurtured musically, intellectually, psychologically, emotionally and socially by their choral experiences. Equally, if the choral experience met these needs, it gained and maintained the students' interest and motivation. Participants in a choral ensemble perceive their musical participation in several ways including as a source of self-esteem; as an opportunity to build confidence; as chance to acquire or exhibit competence in their musical skills; as a means of learning new repertoire; as an opportunity to perform; as an opportunity to interact socially and forge friendships; as an enhancement to or escape from daily life; and as a source of enjoyment and spiritual fulfillment (Bartolome, 2013).

Even amidst of all these dimensions components, students are sometimes solely motivated to engage with a choral ensemble because of parental pressure (Adderley et al., 2003). Their expectations and priorities, therefore, are not born of their own volition but rather may willingly align with those of the choral educators and/or of their parents.

Choral educators' perspectives

Sichivitsa (2007) and Rubie-Davies et al. (2010) agree that educators are uniquely situated in students' lives as they craft meaningful musical learning opportunities that connect both in-school and out-of-school experiences that also involves parents. Rubie-Davies et al. (2010) also points out that while teacher expectations elementary level students has been explored, there is far less research in other areas. Generally speaking, the priorities of choral educators are similar to the general objectives of all music educators – to develop student's musicality and musicianship alongside the development of their musical skills and abilities. For choral educators and administrators, their expectations can perhaps be viewed as synonymous to the goals of their program. The goals of each program may be unique as there are different models that choral educators may embrace. Bartolome (2013) quotes a chorister who describes a school choral experiences as 'never going beyond just singing a song', a model that doesn't allow choristers to evolve as musicians. She describes a 'conductor-as-educator' orientation which is a more education-driven approach as opposed to entailing a solely performance-based curricula. Bartolome (2013) encourages educators to "consider the ways a more democratic approach to directing might foster . . . leadership skills and help inspire lifelong music-making activities" (p. 415). Bartolome (2013) makes a call for continued research as she states,

The constantly changing nature of today's global society indicates that studies such as these should continue, tracking how the role of music in the lives of participants changes over time, such that we as music educators might adapt as well. (p. 415)

A choral educator's philosophy on music may also play a role in how they envision and design the choral experiences that their program offers. For some educators, they subscribe to a philosophy that prioritizes the more utilitarian functions of music such as where music is viewed mainly as having the ability to help and improve one's mental state, cultivate habits, improve discipline etc. (Sugden, 2005). These philosophies tend to lead to more performance-based models as previously discussed and music as a useful means of achieving or improving another aspect of life. This is likely to be different to a program guided by the philosophy of John Dewey. Sugden (2005) quotes Dewey's statement that:

“[the arts] reveal a depth and range of meaning in experiences which otherwise might be mediocre and trivial . . . they select and focus the elements of enjoyable worth which make any experience directly enjoyable. They are not luxuries of education, but emphatic expressions of that which makes any education worthwhile” (p.1)

Dewey's view sees music as aesthetic experience and its 'usefulness' or purpose is simply to be that experience. It places greater value in the aesthetic nature of music, understanding that it is an experience for the sake of having an experience – art for the sake of art.

National Core Arts Standards

The key focuses of the National Core Arts Standards (NCAS) “to provide standards and supplemental materials that would be of maximum help to [music] educators, both in shaping their instructional programs and in advocating for those programs” (Shuler, Norgaard &

Blakeslee, 2014, p.41). The NCAS are structured into four artistic processes: creating, performing, responding, and connecting. Though these standards are intended many areas of music education, as it is for the K-12 setting, this matches with the target age group of community children's choruses. Beyond performance opportunities, there may be some overlap as educators try to align their curriculums with those of the schools. Shuler et al. (2014) finds that many ensembles fall short when it comes to incorporating activities that employ creativity. The authors highlight that creativity is one of the more neglected artistic processes.

Parent perspectives

Parents may not readily be thought of as participants in the choral experience but particularly in the case of community youth choirs they hold a unique position and perspective. They play an active role in supporting the student throughout the choral experience and therefore come with or eventually develop their own expectations and priorities of the choral experience. In some cases, students' motivation to join are due to pressure received from parents (Adderley et al., 2003). In other cases, parental influence is just seen as an important external factor (Sichivitsa, 2007). Some studies even find that parent expectations have more effect on students than either teacher or peer expectations (Mcpherson, 2008; Rubie-Davies et al., 2010; Sichivitsa, 2007). Many parents support the child's participation in a choir as they hold the perception that it aids or contributes to the acquisition of extra-musical skills e.g., learning how to get along with others (Sugden, 2005).

Mcpherson (2008) found that parents desire opportunities where their children can experience positive achievement. He presents these four psychological needs that parents want to provide for their children, to feel (1) competent, (2) autonomous, (3) related, and (4) purposeful. Regarding competence he cites:

The more children perceive themselves as competent, the more they are likely to engaged in learning tasks, utilize the skills and strategies they possess, persist when they confront difficulties and achieve success (Mcpherson, 2008, p.92).

Close parent-child bonding is another related aspect of parents' involvement, which contributes toward positive perspectives of the choral experience. Feeling 'related' refers to feelings of feeling connected by a loving bond and feeling 'purposeful' is about engaging in meaningful and valuable learning that relate to their own personal goals and bring enjoyment and success (McPherson, 2008) It is also linked to the desire to have their child(ren) to feel autonomous -- to make more of their own independent choices.

Sichivitsa (2007) takes a look into the influences on students' motivation, many of which stem from parents. She outlines a path-analytical model that links parental support and previous musical experience to student's perceptions of their own musical abilities and overall self-concept in music. Additionally, it links academic integration and social integration as important factors for parents and that these contribute how much value students place in their musical experiences. This perceived value feeds the last component of the model, students' musical intentions, which deals with their willingness to participate in musical activities and continue to partake in future activities. Overall, parental perspective often weighs heavily in deciding what choir they allow their student to attend usually influenced on whether or not the choral experience offered matches with their expectations on at least some level.

Very few studies on parent expectations of achievement have been explored in comparison to those of students and teachers. Rubie-Davies et al., (2010) takes a broad look at parent expectations of achievement and parents' expectations of teachers but this lack of inquiry demonstrates that parent perspectives are commonly overlooked in several areas. In the authors'

brief look into this area of parent perspectives, they posit that parent beliefs and high expectations can have positive influences on students and their experiences.

Alignment of perspectives

Creech (2010) delves parental support when learning music. She refers to ‘interaction clusters’ which presents six variations of the dynamic relationship among pupils, parents, and teachers. These were each assessed for their impact on student outcomes in a musical experience. Various combinations of parent-pupil-teacher interactions were compared and overall, two dynamics were found to be most effective; a ‘dominant duo’ – which involves a strong teacher-parent dynamic that together impacts students; and a ‘harmonious trio’ – which describes a strong and balanced connection among each group. Whilst the harmonious trio is considered to be a more optimal and desirable design, the study highlights the fact that other dynamics may be at play and this harmonious alignment is not always present. With a paucity of parent perspective in the community children’s chorus, this warrants further investigation in order to add their perspectives. This would broaden our understanding of the various perspectives and dynamics surrounding community children’s choruses and help educators and researchers to lead an informed evolution of these choruses in order to adapt to the social and cultural demands of society today.

From singing societies to school choirs, community choirs, and church choirs, choral ensembles have been and remain a popular and prominent aspect of musical culture and music education. Despite differences in age, musical interest, ability, etc., a choral experience often affords its participants an opportunity to engage and interact with other members of their area and find community in our increasingly diverse society. The choral ensemble is one of the major large ensemble models of music education of America. In addition to playing a prominent role in

training of professional musicians and music educators, it has also been “a medium through which the amateur singer, of any age, may enjoy music” (Sugden, 2005, p.3).

Considering these many perspectives, priorities, and expectations, I question why there is little research on parent perspectives. Insight into parent’s perspectives may better allow for a more harmonious alignment among choristers, parents and choral educators. More information on parent expectations may reveal an awareness of the shortcomings of the community children’s choruses if they lack activities that explore all four artistic processes of the NCAS. Ultimately, a better understanding of parents’ perspectives allows choral educators to assess whether or not their objectives are well aligned. The implications also allow for a better understanding of the strengths of a choral program or how to work toward alignment in response to the progression of education and the dynamic nature of our society.

Chapter 3: Method

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into parent perspectives of a community children's chorus. Research questions guiding this inquiry included:

1. What are the publicly stated goals and expected outcomes of a community children's chorus organization?
2. Do parents' perspectives align with the chorus' publicly stated goals and expected outcomes?
3. Do parents' perspectives align with the four artistic processes of the National Core Arts Standards?
4. What are some of the more important experiences that parents value of their child(ren)'s experience in a community children's chorus?
5. What if any differences exist among musician and non-musician parents?

I administered a survey to the parent population of a community children's chorus. I then employed descriptive statistics and ran several simple group difference comparisons to explore my research questions.

Participation Selection

I obtained a purposive sample of parent participants from a community children's chorus in a mid-Atlantic metropolitan area as I wanted to explore the aims and parental priorities within a single organization. Over the past four years I have built a working relationship with the directors and some parents of the organization. At the time of this study the member directory had a total of 267 parents.

The Singmore Children's Chorus

The pseudonym, 'Singmore Children's Chorus' (SCC) will be used to refer to the community children's chorus sampled in this study.

SCC is a non-profit arts organization, located in a mid-Atlantic metropolitan area. Founded in 1995, the mission statement reads, "[Singmore Children's Chorus] nurtures artistic excellence and empowers young singers by celebrating our shared humanity and the value of every voice" (Mission, n.d.). The chorus accepts children aged 8-18 to belong to and participate in one of its six auditioned choruses. Although the Singmore chorus requires an audition, no child is denied a chance to join the chorus. The audition process is mainly to allow an opportunity for the directors to place the young singers into an ensemble based on their ability. Children younger than 8 years of age are placed in one of two preparatory singing classes aptly titled, PREP classes. These PREP classes introduce first-time singers to the choral experience. It focuses on singing through movement and play, which fosters a lifelong relationship with music while teaching proper breathing, posture, and basic music literacy skills. PREP I is best suited for children in grades K-1 and does not require an audition. PREP II is for students in grades 1-3 and also requires an audition with the same goal as previously mentioned.

The Singmore Children's Chorus' artistic vision statement sums up the aims of the organization:

- High quality choral music should be accessible to everyone.
- All children can and should experience the power and joy of singing.
- Music education and performance experiences are essential to the development of a high personal standard of excellence.

- The chorus experience develops strong character and builds community leaders through self-discipline, confidence, commitment, teamwork, and respect for others.
- A choral organization is a community of individuals that feel they are valued and work together toward a purpose. Through this kind of community, we feel connected with others, physically and emotionally.

On SCC's website, under the banner 'Benefits of Chorus' it states, Our choristers:

- Form strong friendships with other students who share the same passion for singing
- Meet students from over 120 different schools throughout the [Metropolitan area]
- Achieve the highest level of choral excellence by mastering vocal technique, learning challenging music repertoire from all over the world, and performing from memory at a range of venues.
- Learn self-discipline and how to work collaboratively toward a mutual goal to become confident, responsible, and compassionate community members
- Experience unique performance opportunities as featured guest artists, and with [the] leading professional groups like the [Major] Symphony Orchestra, [and two other prominent accomplished adult choruses]
- Perform all over [the metropolitan area] at churches, libraries, retirement communities, and prestigious venues such as [prominent performing arts centers, state and governmental buildings, stadiums, and businesses].
- Become lifelong music lovers.

The list ends with a link to The Chorus Impact Study by Chorus America, inviting the reader to learn more about the individual benefits of participating in a chorus.

SCC's demographic information was made available upon request which provided a profile of the choristers only during the 2020-2021 season. (See Table 1)

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of Singmore Chorus choristers 2020-2021 (N = 168)

Baseline characteristics	n	%
State of residence		
Local State	71	42
Northeastern neighboring state	55	33
Southwestern neighboring state	40	24
Other	2	1
Gender		
Male	39	23
Female	125	74
Non-binary	2	1
Prefer not to say	2	1
Race/Ethnicity		
Asian	10	6
Black or African American	14	8
White	104	62
Hispanic or Latinx	8	5
Multi-racial	20	12
Prefer not to say	12	7

Singmore Children's Chorus choristers are approximately three-fifths White and other racial groups (Asian, Hispanic, Black or African American) make up the remaining two-fifths. Table 2 provides the full demographic information in the metropolitan area where the Singmore Children's Chorus resides.

Table 2*2019 Demographic characteristics of the metropolitan area (N = 705,749)*

Baseline characteristics	n	%
Race and Ethnicity		
White	324,645	46.0
Black or African American	324,645	46.0
American Indian and Alaska Native	4,234	0.6
Asian	31,759	4.5
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	706	0.1
Two or more races	20,467	2.9
Hispanic or Latino	79,750	11.3
White, not Hispanic or Latino	264,656	37.5

Development of Survey

Prior to developing this survey, I contacted three parents of choristers currently enrolled in the Singmore chorus for the purpose of conducting informal, exploratory interviews. The goal of these interviews was to gain preliminary insight into their perspectives as parents of the current choristers.

I referred to the prompts related to expectations listed in Rubie-Davies et al., (2010) to assist inform the construction of a semi-structured interview. The surveys of relevant literature were consulted to guide my inquiry (Bartolome, 2013; Rubie-Davies et al., 2010; Sichivitsa, 2007). I began by asking these parents, “what were some of the reasons/events that lead you to enroll your child(ren) in [Singmore Chorus]?”. From our thirty- to forty-minute conversation, I

returned to the literature to determine whether there were any connections that might help to direct my inquiry.

The commonalities among their stories were that they recognized their child's interest and talent in singing; a friend or teacher lauded their child's talent; they were inspired to look for opportunities to help explore and develop their child's talent. Some parents were directly recommended to the Singmore chorus by someone who was affiliated with the chorus. Their inquiry brought them to the SCC website which appealed to them.

I considered the statements under SCC's artistic vision as the goals of SCC. My first set of survey items aimed to gain insight on the aspects of these SCC goals that have influenced parents' decision to enroll in SCC. Using each statement under the artistic vision, I included a series of items beginning with, 'When I first enrolled my child(ren) in SCC, I did so because . . .'. The last statement of the artistic vision contained two sentences and so I decided to split it and create two items.

Based on participants responses, the survey tool filtered the items that they agreed with (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree) into a subsequent ranking item. Participants were then tasked with ranking each statement according to the level of importance based on their initial motivations to enroll in the chorus. After this, in order to capture parents' motivations not limited to the previous options I included an open-ended question, 'Are there any other reasons not previously mention that influenced your decision to enroll your child(ren) in the [Singmore Children's Chorus]?'.

In section 2 I lead with a similar prompt, asking parents to focus on their initial expectations prior to enrolling their child(ren) in the chorus. This time the items focused on each of the four artistic processes of the National Core Arts Standards (performing, creating,

responding, and connecting) where participants were asked to respond using the same 7-point Likert scale of their agreement. Anticipating that parents may not be familiar with these processes, I crafted three items to elaborate on and therefore reduce the ambiguity surrounding each artistic process. Each item was derived using key words from the objectives listed under each artistic process from the main NCAS document. Similar to section 1, each item began with, ‘when I first enrolled my child(ren) in [SCC], I did so because I expected the program to teach them how to. . .’. For performing the statements crafted were: (1) perform music expressively; (2) perform music with technical accuracy; (3) perform a varied repertoire of music. For creating/composing: (1) compose new/original work; (2) arrange a musical work; (3) improvise musical ideas. For responding: (1) understand the elements of music; (2) analyze the context (social, cultural, and historical) of music; (3) evaluate the quality of music. For connecting: (1) connect personal interests to music; (2) relate music to daily life; (3) understand relationships between music and other arts and disciplines. The NCAS artistic processes were seen as overarching aims from the perspective of choral music educators. My decision to include the NCAS artistic processes was based on the premise that a community children’s chorus director would be aware of and familiar with the NCAS artistic processes and their objectives. These objectives, therefore, would highly influence their perspectives as a choral music educator and by extension shape the aims and objectives of their program.

The previous items were followed by another ranking item which filtered the NCAS statements that participants agreed with. Participants were again asked to rank each statement according to the level of importance based on their initial motivations to enroll in the chorus. Section 2 concluded with the open-ended question, ‘Are there any other important aspects that you wish were included in your child(ren)’s choral experience?’.

Out of the preliminary interviews, one of the details that piqued my interest was that each parent revealed that neither them nor their spouses considered themselves as a musician or being musical. This prompted me to consider inserting a relevant question that would allow a cross analysis of the responses on whether or not the parent considers themselves a musician or non-musician. The debate on what is a ‘musician’ is a lengthy one, particularly for those of us who subscribe to Christopher Small’s philosophy on ‘musiking’. To minimize the number of questions asked, I am satisfied with a response based on their own perception rather having questions that attempt to over qualify their decision. Beginning section 3, I posed the question: ‘do you consider yourself to be a musician?’. The response options were, ‘Yes, professional musician’, ‘Yes, amateur musician’, or ‘No’. Other survey items included an open-ended question, ‘what are your past musical experiences’, and ‘what, if any, are your musical experiences within the past three years?’, with a few options to select all that apply and/or specify another.

Participants were also asked, “In what year did you first enroll your child(ren) in [SCC]” in order to understand how long the parent has been associated with SCC. To clarify, the survey was only sent using the roster of currently enrolled SCC parents (N = 267) and responses from former parents were not solicited.

Lastly, items to collect demographic information were included to better describe the characteristics of respondents. The questions included were: ‘What is your race/ethnicity?’, ‘What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?’, ‘Select the role that best describes your relationship to your child(ren)’ (see Appendix A).

Survey Administration and Data

An email was sent out on April 28 to SCCs' parent roster inviting the parents or guardians to participate in the survey. The survey was made available for two weeks and closed on May 12. Two additional reminder emails were sent to solicit more responses. The invitations yielded a total of 64 (23.2%) participants. The survey data were compiled using the survey software Qualtrics. Once the survey closed, the numerical data were exported from the survey tool into an Excel spreadsheet and then imported into statistical software Stata.

For the agreement questions, the Qualtrics software assigned the numeric value 1 = strongly agree leading up to 7 = strongly disagree. The data were recoded to reverse the assignment and the labels were redefined so that 1=strongly disagree leading up to 7 = strongly agree. The assignment of a higher number for increased agreement along an axis would be more visually appealing and facilitate easier interpretation of the results.

Due to the small sample size, in order to obtain a better understanding of the overall the agreement and disagreement for each of the agreement items, the responses were consolidated into three groups: all responses in disagreement (strongly disagree, disagree, and somewhat disagree) were consolidated under one label (disagree = 1); responses that selected 'neither agree nor disagree' remained intact (neither agree nor disagree = 2); all responses in agreement (strongly agree, agree, and somewhat agree) were consolidated under one label (agree = 3).

The responses from three items derived from the NCAS artistic processes were aggregated to view the overall agreement for each process. The aggregate agreement of statements was considered as an indication of alignment between parents' perspectives and the NCAS.

Both ranking questions, the first which asked to rank the SCC goals, and the second which asked to rank each statement derived from the NCAS produced a range of responses since it was based on the statements they agreed with. To elaborate, if participants agreed (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree) to all six of the SCC goals, they were subsequently asked to rank each of the six the goals in order of importance. Likewise, of the NCAS statements agreed with all twelve statements, they were prompted to rank all twelve statements in order of importance. For both questions, the average ranking of each statement was determined more clearly understand, on a scale of 1-12, which statements received a higher priority.

Participant responses to the question, ‘do you consider yourself to be a musician’ was consolidated into ‘musician’ if they responded either ‘yes, professional musician’, or ‘yes, amateur musician’.

For the item to identify participants’ race or ethnicity, one participant responded by selecting two race groups. This string response was reassigned to the numeric value for ‘two or more races.’

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into parent perspectives of a community children's chorus. My research questions were:

1. What are the publicly stated goals and expected outcomes of a community children's chorus organization?
2. Do parents' perspectives align with the chorus' publicly stated goals and expected outcomes?
3. Do parents' perspectives align with the four artistic processes of the National Core Arts Standards?
4. What are some of the more important experiences that parents value of their child(ren)'s experience in a community children's chorus?
5. What if any differences exist among musician and non-musician parents?

In this chapter I will present demographic results followed by an exploration of results organized by research question.

Demographic Analysis

I analyzed the data to give a profile of the participants of this survey (see Table 3). Majority of the respondents were the female (79%), White (74%) and considered themselves as a non-musician (75%). Most respondents were a parent (98%) of a chorister, as opposed to being a guardian, and had only one child (87%) currently enrolled in the chorus. The participants were all highly educated: 4-year degree (27%), Professional degree (53%), Doctorate (29%). There was a 13-year range (2008-2021) of the year that the parent first enrolled their child(ren) in SCC. I was able to compile the entries conveniently into three groups spanning three years. Parents

who first enrolled in 2019-2021 can be considered as a fairly recent enrollment. The explanation for parents who have been part of SCC before 2019 and as far back as 2008 is not that they have remained on the parent roster in error but that they have had more than one child enrolled in the chorus some years apart.

Table 3

Demographic characteristics of survey participants (N = 64)

Baseline characteristics	n	%
Gender		
Female	45	79
Male	12	21
Parent, Guardian		
Parent	56	98
Guardian	1	2
Highest educational level		
4-year degree	15	27
Professional degree	29	53
Doctorate	11	20
Musician, Non-musician		
Professional	3	5
Amateur	11	20
Non-Musician	42	75
Race and Ethnicity		
White	42	74
Black or African American	2	4
Asian	8	14
Two or more races	2	4
Prefer not to say	3	5
No. of children currently enrolled		
One (1)	50	87
Two (2)	7	12
Year when parent first enrolled their child(ren)		
2019 – 2021	25	44
2011 – 2013	26	46
2008 – 2010	6	11

What are the publicly stated goals and expected outcomes of a community children's chorus organization?

The following statements were listed under the Singmore Children's Chorus' artistic vision statement and were interpreted as the publicly stated goals and expectations:

- High quality choral music should be accessible to everyone.
- All children can and should experience the power and joy of singing.
- Music education and performance experiences are essential to the development of a high personal standard of excellence.
- The chorus experience develops strong character and builds community leaders through self-discipline, confidence, commitment, teamwork, and respect for others.
- A choral organization is a community of individuals that feel they are valued and work together toward a purpose. Through this kind of community, we feel connected with others, physically and emotionally.

Do parents' perspectives align with the chorus' publicly stated goals and expected outcomes?

The first six items of the survey were aimed at investigating whether or not there was alignment between parents' initial motivations and the choir's publicly stated goals. As a reminder the items were, 'when I first enrolled my child(ren) in SCC, I did so because...':

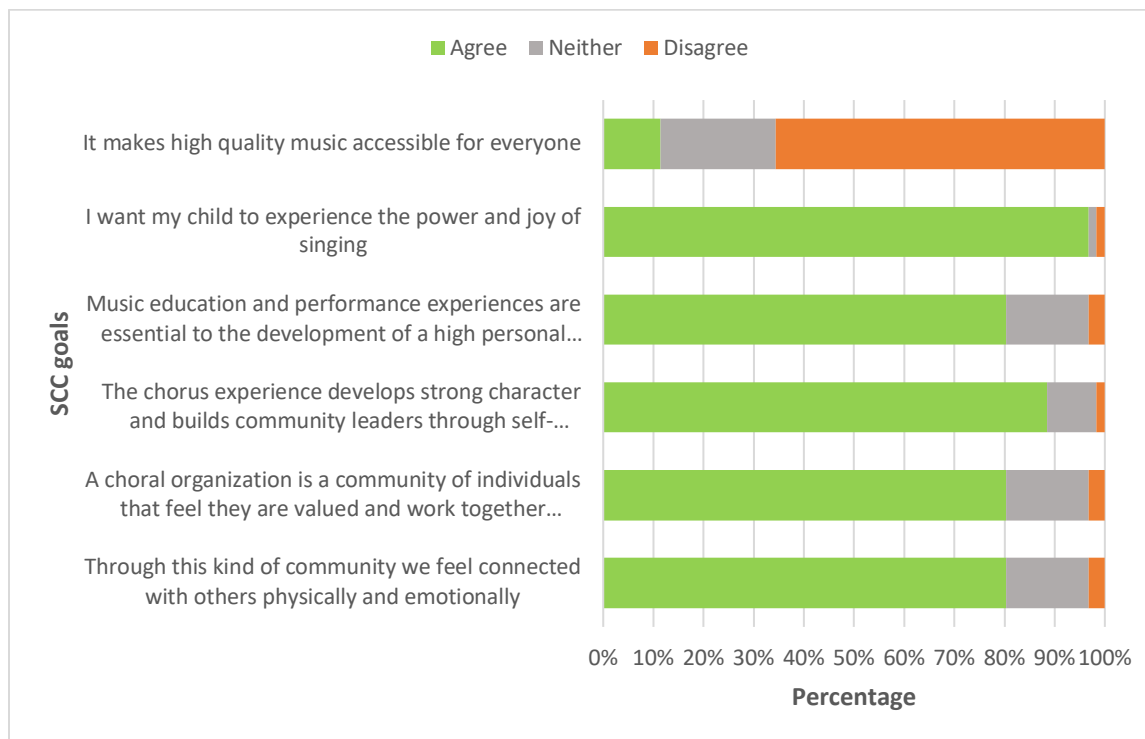
1. It makes high quality music accessible for everyone.
2. I want my child to experience the power and joy of singing.
3. Music education and performance experiences are essential to the development of a high personal standard of excellence.

4. The chorus experience develops strong character and builds community leaders through self-discipline, confidence, commitment, teamwork, and respect for others.
5. A choral organization is a community of individuals that feel they are valued and work together toward a purpose.
6. Through this kind of community, we feel connected with others physically and emotionally.

For the purpose of analysis, I consolidated the agreement (somewhat agree, agree, strongly agree) and disagreement (somewhat disagree, disagree, strongly disagree) responses for each item in section 1. This analysis revealed that the top two organization goals that parents most agreed with were ‘I want my child to experience the power and joy of singing’ (97%) followed by “the chorus experience develops strong character and builds community leaders through self-discipline, confidence, commitment, teamwork, and respect for other” (89%). Although almost all of SCC’s goals were highly agreed upon, the least agreed upon and consequently most disagreed with was the statement “It makes high quality music accessible to everyone” (See Figure 1).

Figure 1

Agreement/disagreement with goals of SCC

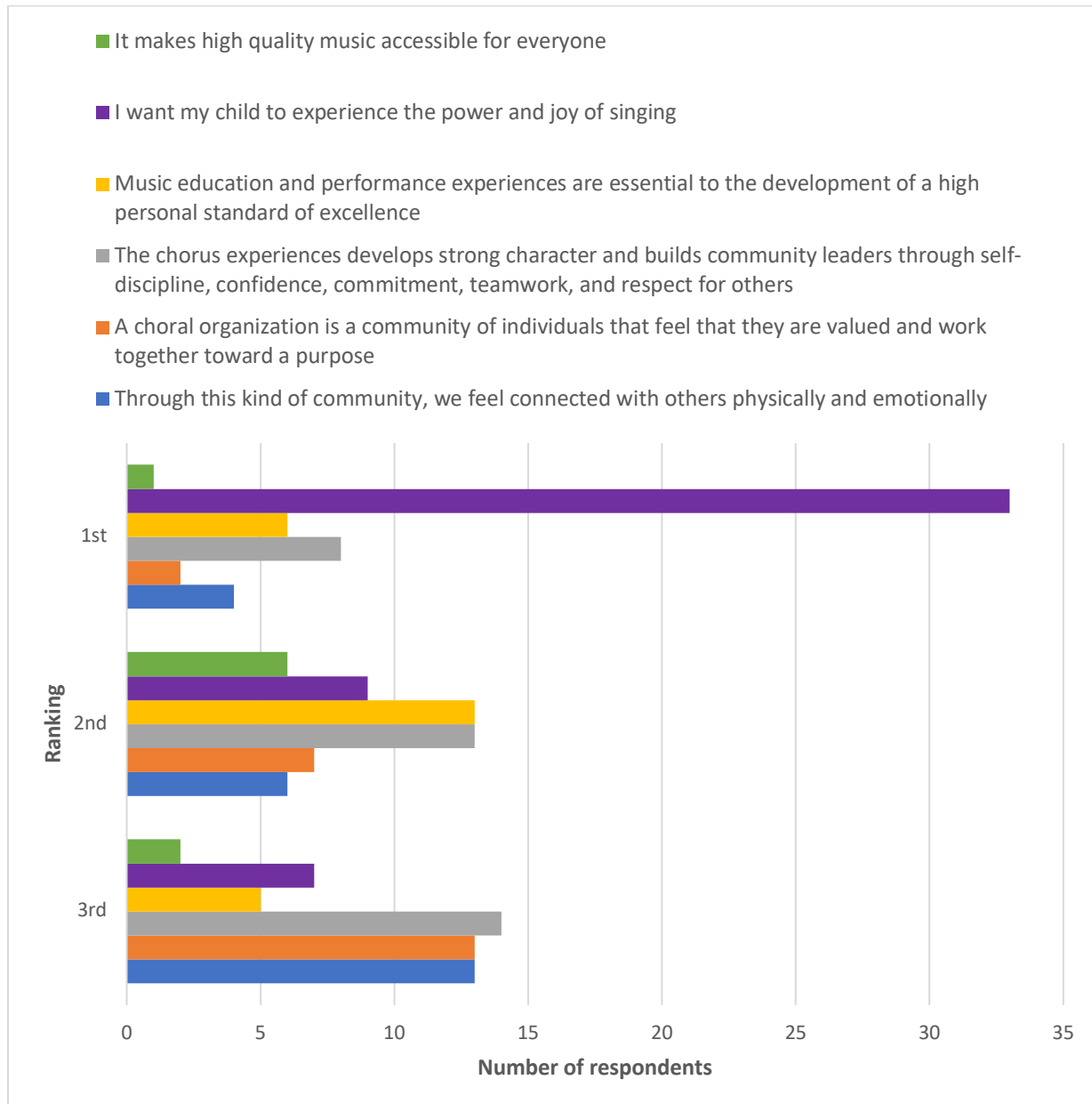


Note. Figure showing parents' overall agreement with SCC's goals as aligning with their initial motivations to enroll their child(ren) in the chorus.

From the item that asked participants to rank the goals of SCC that they agreed with, 'I want my child to experience the power and joy of singing' was ranked 1st by the majority of respondents (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

What parents ranked as the top three SCC goals that aligned with their initial motivations to enroll in the chorus.



While the 1st place ranking is distinct, the statements ranked 2nd and 3rd were not as evident. To clarify parent participant ranking for each goal is reported in Table 4. The goal, ‘the chorus experience develops strong character and builds community leaders through self-

discipline, confidence, commitment, teamwork and respect for others’ ranked 2nd (2.88), and ‘music education and performance experiences are essential to the development of a high personal standard of excellence’ ranked 3rd (3.28).

Table 4

Average ranking of each SCC goal in descending order

SCC Goal	Average ranking
I want my child to experience the power and joy of singing.	1.72
The chorus experience develops strong character and builds community leaders through self-discipline, confidence, commitment, teamwork, and respect for others.	2.88
Music education and performance experiences are essential to the development of a high personal standard of excellence.	3.28
A choral organization is a community of individuals that feel they are valued and work together toward a purpose.	3.72
Through this kind of community, we feel connected with others, physically and emotionally.	3.77
It makes high quality music accessible to everyone.	4.37

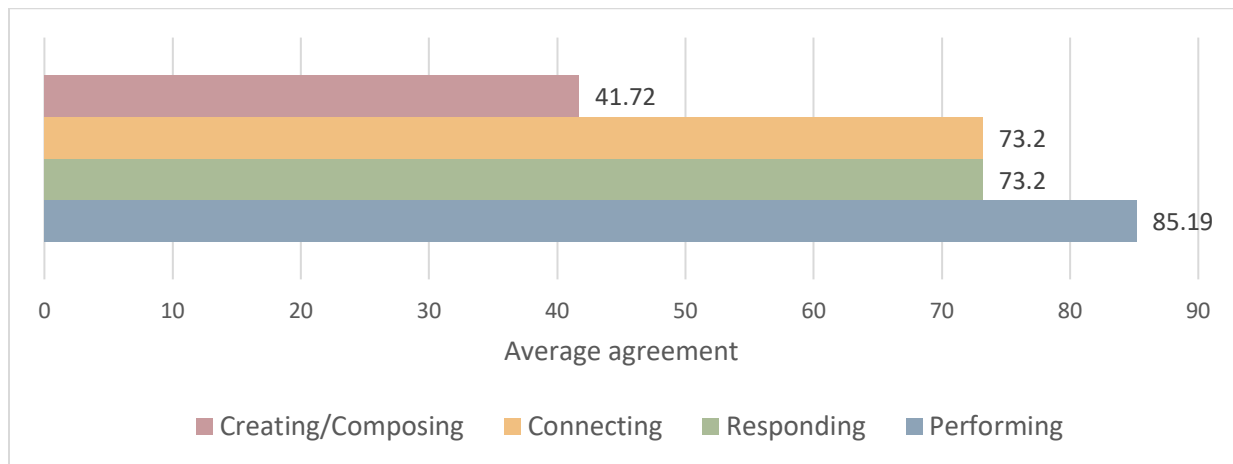
Do parents' perspectives align with the four artistic processes of the National Core Arts Standards?

In section 2 of the questionnaire, each of the NCAS processes (creating, performing, responding, connecting) were represented by a collection of 3 survey items. For the purpose of analysis, I formed an aggregate on agreement of the three statements under each of the NCAS artistic processes, Figure 3 shows that the performing (85.1%) is the artistic process that was mostly agreed upon when considering with parents’ initial motivations. Participants agreed with

the importance of connecting (73.2%) and responding (73.2%), however, tended to value creating/composing (42.7%) less in comparison.

Figure 3

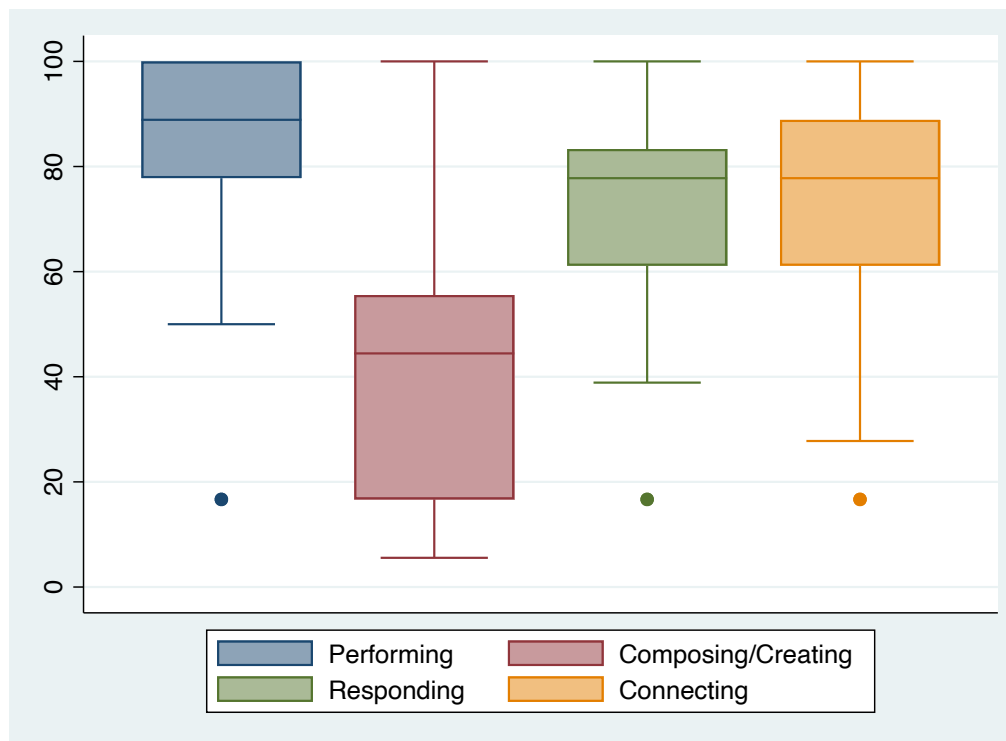
Average agreement from aggregate of each NCAS artistic processes



The range of responses for performing had a smaller span indicative of a more accurate consensus in the overall agreement with the statements that make up this artistic process, whereas the range of responses for composing/creating spanned the entire range and its statements were the least agreed with (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Box and whisker graph of aggregated agreement of each NCAS artistic process



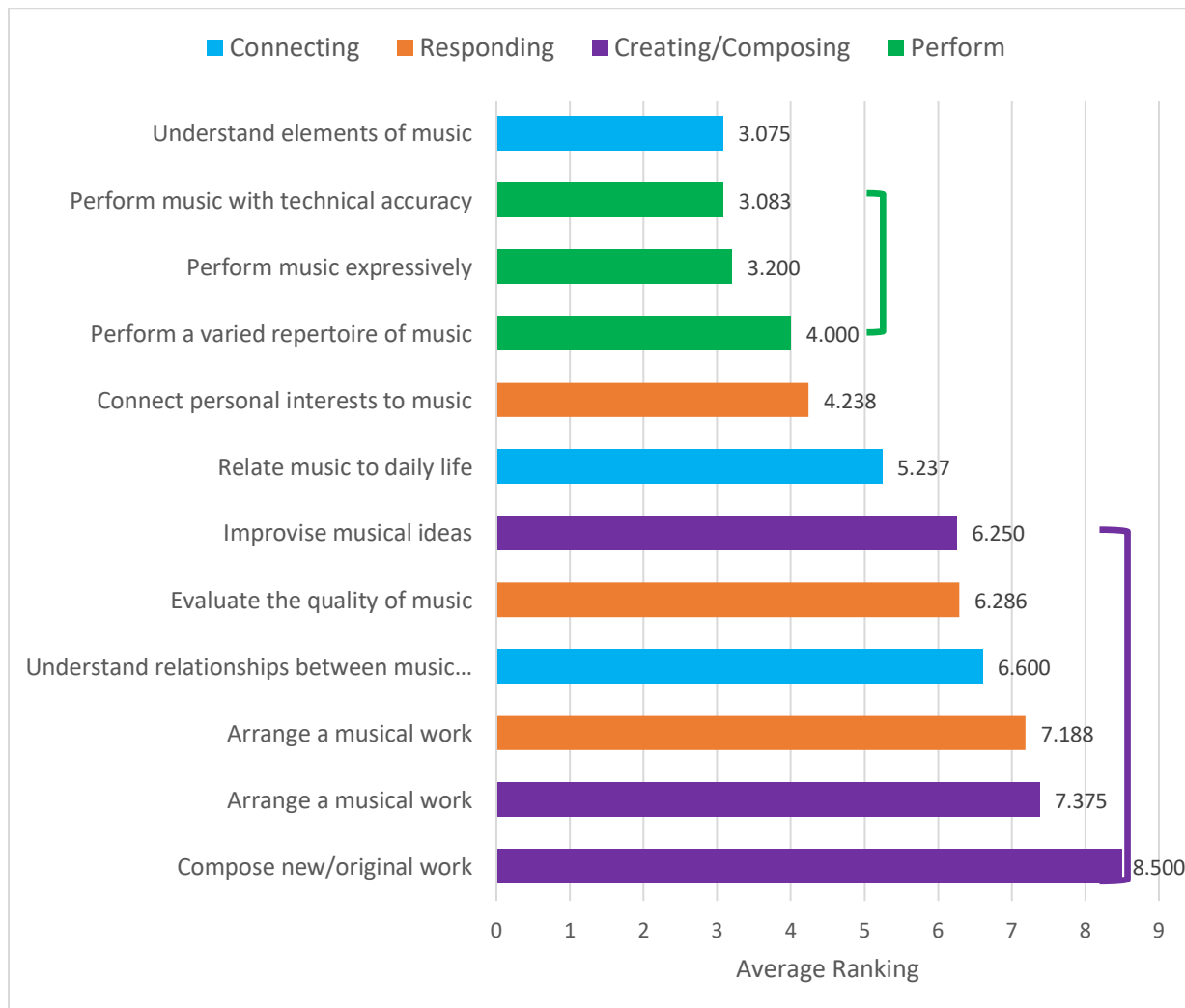
What are some of the more important experiences that parents value of their child(ren)'s experience in a community children's chorus?

Of the NCAS, the three statements that received the highest average ranking were, 'understands the elements of music' (connecting) (3.075), then 'perform music expressively' (performing) (3.083) and 'perform music with technical accuracy' (performing) (3.200) (see Figure 7). Two out of three of these statements were the statements derived from the artistic process performing echoing the previous findings. Whilst all three performing statements had a very high average ranking, the statement "understands the elements of music' falls under the artistic process connecting. The other statements derived from connecting had a more scattered ranking and the statements under responding received an overall low average ranking. Though

‘improvise musical ideas’ ranked toward the middle, the other creating/composing statements received the lowest average ranking.

Figure 5

Average ranking of the NCAS artistic processes.



The first free response item asked parents to state, “any reasons not previously mentioned that influenced your decision to enroll your child(ren) in SCC”, which was designed to provide more insight into parents’ perspectives not limited to the options given. Forty (63%) participants provided brief responses to this item yielding a variety of responses that were analyzed and

placed into six themes. The most common theme, and therefore reason that influenced parent's decision to enroll their child(ren), mentioned in just over half of the responses was that they recognized their 'child's interest or passion for singing'. Another theme that emerged from the analysis surrounded the reputation and opportunities provided by the chorus. Though music education was mentioned in the previous goals it was also a theme of the responses which remarked on the rigorous music education program that the chorus provided. External influence was attributed to responses that discussed influence from someone external to the parent-child relationship or immediate family. Other themes were, forming meaningful connections, and seeking enrichment outside of school (See Table 5). The entire list of free responses is included in Appendix C.

Table 5

Examples for each category created from free response item.

Themes	n	Example of Response
Child's interest or passion for singing	21	<p>The number one reason I enrolled my son is because he loves to sing, and I want him to be happy and enjoy and share his passion for music</p> <p>My child loves to sing and would be singing at home most of the time</p>
Reputation and opportunities	9	<p>It is a premier group with a solid reputation. It also offers exposure beyond [state] and I like the international aspect, as well.</p> <p>High quality performance opportunities</p>
Rigorous music education program	6	<p>High quality and rigorous music education.</p> <p>There are a limited number of children's choruses in [state]. This one took music training seriously, had interesting performance opportunities and the location was accessible for us. *</p>
External influence	5	<p>Guidance from our daughter's music teacher</p> <p>The daughter of one of my friends sings with [SCC] . . . I thought it would be nice for our children to do something together</p>
Form meaningful connections	3	<p>My child had to choose between choir or continuing band and orchestra at school. We moved to the area in October and my daughter didn't know anyone. I hoped she could make friends in the choir. I've been disappointed that there hasn't been room for that.</p> <p>Because my chorister loves to sing and has a good voice and potential. For my chorister and family to form community connections beyond school. *</p>
Seeking enrichment outside of school	2	<p>Looking for a non-school based activity for a child who struggles in the school environment</p> <p>I have always sought music enrichment and education for my children, outside of what is provided at school. *</p>

Note. *Response involved multiple themes

What if any differences exist among musician and non-musician parents?

In order to compare musician and non-musician parents, I conducted multiple group comparisons exploring each item in sections 1 (SCC goals) and 2 (NCAS) of the questionnaire. I used t-tests to explore possible differences in responses based on parents who consider themselves a musician versus being a non-musician. Bonferroni adjustment was made to the initial α -level ($p \leq 0.05$) as a conservative measure in order to reduce the risk of Type I errors brought about by the multiple comparisons, resulting in adjusted α of .008 for the goals items and .013 for NCAS items. Although the data did not yield any significant differences between musician and non-musician parents, a few items approached significance (see Tables 6 & 7).

Table 6

Differences in agreement with SCC's goals between musician parents and non-musician parents.

Goals of SCC	Musician (n = 14)		Non-Musician (n = 42)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
It makes high quality music accessible to everyone	5.57	1.55	5.04	1.45	-1.15	0.255
I want my child to experience the power and joy of singing	6.93	0.27	6.48	0.97	-1.72	0.092
Music education and performance experiences are essential to the development of a high personal standard of excellence	6.29	0.91	5.48	1.40	-2.02	0.048
The chorus experience develops strong character and builds community leaders through self-discipline, confidence, commitment, teamwork, and respect for others.	6.29	0.61	5.79	1.20	-1.49	0.142
A choral organization is a community of individuals that feel they are valued and work together toward a purpose.	6.14	0.23	5.60	1.25	-1.52	0.135
Through this kind of community, we feel connected with others, physically and emotionally.	6.29	0.22	5.60	1.23	-1.95	0.056

Note. Bonferroni correction, * $p \leq 0.008$

Table 7

Differences in agreement with NCAS artistic processes between musician parents and non-musician parents.

NCAS artistic process aggregate	Musician (n = 14)		Non-Musician (n = 42)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Performing	89.81	9.43	83.20	17.81	-1.27	0.211
Creating/Composing	41.45	26.02	42.20	21.85	0.10	0.919
Responding	77.35	18.49	71.69	17.69	-1.00	0.323
Connecting	73.93	18.69	73.15	19.85	-0.12	0.090
3						

Note. Bonferroni correction, * $p < 0.013$

In particular, the SCC statements “I want my child to experience the power and joy of singing,” and “Music education and performance experiences are essential to the development of a high personal standard of excellence,” yielded stronger agreement scores from musician parents as compared to non-musicians. Similarly, musician parents tended to agree more strongly with the items related to the NCAS connecting standard as compared to non-musician parents. The small sample size and unequal groups within this study make further analysis impossible but these areas are worthy of future study.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into parent perspectives of a community children's chorus. The research questions were:

1. What are the publicly stated goals and expected outcomes of a community children's chorus organization?
2. Do parents' perspectives align with the chorus' publicly stated goals and expected outcomes?
3. Do parents' perspectives align with the four artistic processes of the National Core Arts Standards?
4. What are some of the more important experiences that parents value of their child(ren)'s experience in a community children's chorus?
5. What if any differences exist among musician and non-musician parents?

These research questions were aimed at exploring the goals and expected outcomes of a community children's chorus and to determine the alignment of parent perspectives with these goals. They also sought to explore the alignment of parent perspectives with the artistic processes of the National Core Arts Standards. The research also sought to gain an understanding of what were the important aspects that parents wanted their child(ren) to experience in a community children's chorus, and ultimately investigate any differences that may exist among musician and non-musician parents.

In order to investigate these questions, I surveyed the parents of choristers enrolled in a community children's chorus in a mid-Atlantic metropolitan area, Singmore Children's Chorus. The survey was developed first by conducting brief interviews parents of choristers currently

enrolled in the chorus. The similarities among their stories included recognizing their child's interest and talent in singing; a friend or teacher lauding their child's talent; being inspired to look for opportunities to help explore and develop their child's talent. Some parents were directly recommended to SCC by someone who was affiliated with the chorus and their inquiry brought them to the SCC website which appealed to them. Using the publicly stated goals from the artistic vision statement listed on SCC's website, items and questions of the survey were crafted. Many of the items asked parents to select their level of agreement or disagreement with SCC goals based on their initial motivations. The artistic processes of National Core Arts Standards were viewed as goals that choral directors would be aware of and that it would influence the goals of SCC as well as other similar organizations. Parent participants were also asked to select their level of agreement or disagreement with the NCAS artistic processes as well as rank SCC goals and the NCAS artistic processes based on their level of importance to their decision to enroll in the chorus.

In this chapter, I will discuss the demographic profile of the respondents as well as the results of the research as it relates to previous literature organized by each of the research questions. I will also discuss the limitations of this research, the implications for music education, and future research.

Demographic profile of respondents

Considering that our perspectives are shaped by countless factors, the demographic profile provides a few points of intersection in favor of a more nuanced understanding of the perspectives presented in this research. Whilst there is consensus among this group of participants in their responses, they are united in their position as parents of this choral organization, there is both validity and limitation from the uniqueness of their perspectives.

The majority of respondents were female (79%); the parent (98%); a non-musician (75%); and had only one child (87%) currently enrolled in the chorus. Most respondents identified as White (74%), Asian (14%), Black or African American (4%), and Mixed (4%). Highly educated parents were drawn to SCC as the sample of participants were all college educated or higher: Professional Degree (53%), 4-year degree (27%), Doctorate (20%).

These are among the reasons why these findings are not generalizable to other parent populations and similar choral organizations but warrant future research of a wider representation to add to the currently limited literature. This would serve well to inform future decisions and designs of community children's chorus organizations.

Discussion of the demographic profile adds to our overall understanding of this sample but also furthers the conversation about barriers to access, inclusion, and diversity. As I examined the demographic profile there are numerous questions that arose: Would perspectives greatly differ if the study obtained more male perspectives? Why does it seem that a more educated population is seeking out or aware of these musical opportunities? Though the demographics of SCC choristers and the parent participants in this study are similar, there is a noticeable contrast in comparison to the profile of the state in which SCC is located. Something as simple as the particular location of a chorus in a city or state may affect access from certain potential participants who want to access this opportunity. In SCC's case, the rehearsal venue is currently located in an area that is considered a more affluent and a predominantly White neighborhood. It therefore makes sense that the demographic profile appears as it does. There is not much we as choral educators may be able to do about the demographic make-up of cities and neighborhoods, but we may need to consider the extend of the reach of the choir and

how to overcome issues related to this. Choral organizations may consider solutions that increase their visibility such as having multiple rehearsal venues in various areas.

Although this detail wasn't captured in this survey, factors like household income and other socioeconomic factors may affect access. A community chorus's funding may come from a variety of sources, whether donor funded, state assisted, student tuition, etc. Even if the choir is entirely cost free for participants, there are other aspects such as performance attire and travel costs to performance venues that arise. Elpus & Grisé (2019) discuss that in areas where the average household income is higher, there are more financial resources available to benefit a music program. While their study discussed music booster programs for public schools exacerbating funding inequality, the understanding of more financial support being available can certainly extend toward community choral organizations.

I also consider an aspect surrounding students' perspective and wonder about students' access to music education and factors surrounding the likelihood of interest based on whether their school has a music education program or not. From SCC's current chorister roster, there are only two students who are homeschooled and the remainder attending either public or private school equally. The area is known to have robust music education programs but mainly instrumental ensemble programs. SCC, therefore, fills a void by providing an alternate to the type of program. There may be an appeal to choral administrators be based in a more affluent area to reap the benefits toward a more prosperous organization, however I return to pleading the case that good music education opportunities should be available to all and not exclusive to the more economically privileged.

There is no specific antidote that we can prescribe to all choirs to resolve issues of access, inclusion and diversity but choral educators, particularly those of community choruses, must

reflect deeply and consider whether their chorus is in fact working toward creating community that reflects the community.

Lastly, I stretch my thinking to wonder how choral educators might reimagine the structures of choirs. Reimagining the structure, programming, and curriculum of a community choir, to fully embody its role in the community and building one, may lead to providing a more well-rounded experience. This would be largely beneficial to communities where music education programs are on the decrease or non-existent. As our communities and musical culture evolve and become more diverse, the structure, programming, and curriculum also need to evolve. As music educators we may need to envision other ways beyond traditional approaches to engage and include various communities and revitalize interest.

What are the publicly stated goals and expected outcomes of a community children's chorus organization?

Rao (1993) discusses the significance of community children's choruses and the role they adopted in response to the demise of choral singing in schools. The founding of the Singmore Children's Chorus in 1995 may have been part of the continued momentum of the children's choir movement. She further suggests that the overall aim of choral singing should be to achieve self-growth and enjoyment and discusses a holistic approach where students engage meaningfully with the music. It was unclear if the goals of SCC have remained the same or evolved since its founding, however, from the statements listed under SCC's artistic vision we see a broad range of goals. The goals listed by SCC were:

- High quality choral music should be accessible to everyone.
- All children can and should experience the power and joy of singing.

- Music education and performance experiences are essential to the development of a high personal standard of excellence.
- The chorus experience develops strong character and builds community leaders through self-discipline, confidence, commitment, teamwork, and respect for others.
- A choral organization is a community of individuals that feel they are valued and work together toward a purpose. Through this kind of community, we feel connected with others, physically and emotionally.

The scope of SCC's goals reflects the views of Elliott (1993), Rao (1993) and Tagg (1993) that choruses should not be limited to performances but expand to include and balance opportunities to increase musicianship and optimize musical enjoyment and self-growth.

Do parents' perspectives align with the chorus' publicly stated goals and expected outcomes?

The results reported in Chapter 4, Figure 1 showed an overall high-level agreement with SCC's objectives. This is a favorable result viewed through the lens of Rubie-Davies et al., (2010) and Sichivitsa (2007), who posit that positive parent perspectives weigh heavily on student participation and success. In terms of alignment of their perspectives, the goal, 'I want my child to experience the power and joy of singing' received a 97% agreement level and was ranked as the most important of the stated goals. This finding also aligns with Kennedy (2009) who found that one of the main reasons people were drawn to a choir was simply because they loved to sing. With the majority of SCC's goals aligning with parents' perspectives, only one goal received significant disagreement; 'it makes high quality music accessible to everyone'. A possible explanation for this result may depend on how this goal was viewed. It may be perceived that the responsibility for this goal lies solely on the choral educators or administration therefore it was strongly disagreed with as it does not directly involve parents or their child(ren).

This goal was also dissimilar to the other stated goals as it does not imply a direct benefit that can be gained by an individual chorister.

Do parents' perspectives align with the four artistic processes of the National Core Arts Standards?

The NCAS four artistic processes (performing, creating/composing, responding, and connecting) were considered a well-known resource that would be a likely influence on all music educators and therefore play a role in shaping a program such as a community children's chorus (Overview of 2014 Music Standards, n.d.). The NCAS artistic processes served as the best point of comparison for a well-rounded musical education.

The aggregate agreement of performing (85%) received the highest agreement with a fair consensus demonstrated by the smaller range of responses. It is understandable that performing will always remain as a top priority for any ensemble let alone a community children's chorus as it is the most visible component of the choral ensemble experience. Though the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic impacted many choral organizations in this way, it is unimaginable that during a normal year a community children's chorus would propose performance deficient choral experience that would be enticing enough to attract and sustain the interest of students and align with parents' expectations. Whilst it is understandable that performing would remain as a top priority and a major aspect of the goals of a community children's chorus, Bartolome (2013) cautions choral educators to avoid 'conductor-as-educator' models that center their curricula solely on performance goals.

In contrast, composing/creating (42%) received the lowest level of agreement but with a weak consensus due to the wide range of responses. This aligns with Shuler et al. (2014) who found that many ensembles fall short when it comes to incorporating activities that employ

creativity. As many choral ensembles do not consistently include activities surrounding composing and creating it is understandable that parents may have not readily understood what composing/creating entails within the context of the choral experience, nor would they expect it. It would therefore continue to receive a lower level of agreement regarding its influence on their decision to enroll in the chorus. Parent perspectives and expectations may be drastically different depending on the type of choir. For example, a community children's chorus that focuses on Gospel repertoire may include goals that center the ability to improvise (ad-libbing, scatting, etc.) and as a result parents' perspectives would more readily include creating/composing as a valuable and expected component of the choral experience. Parent perspectives can continue to be explored as it would continue to be different for all types of community children's choruses (show choirs, jazz choirs, etc.). Regardless of the type of choir, the onus is on choral educators to include a variety of activities involving aspects from all four of the artistic processes in pursuit of a well-rounded musical experience.

What are some of the more important experiences that parents value of their child(ren)'s experience in a community children's chorus?

The results of the average ranking of the NCAS statements found that 'understands the elements of music' (3.075) ranked highest followed by, 'perform music expressively' (3.083) and 'perform music with technical accuracy' (3.200). Despite performing receiving the highest overall agreement, the 'understanding elements of music' derived from the NCAS artistic process connecting was ranked as the most important aspect that influenced parents' decision to enroll their child(ren). This was an important finding as it further challenges any notion that performance goals and opportunities are the sole or most important goal of a music ensemble

such as a community children's chorus. Furthermore, it confirms that a goal other than one related to performance can be prioritized and aligns with parents' perspectives.

The free response item yielded a relatively substantial number of responses (63%). Of the six themes presented, 'child's interest or passion for singing', and 'external coincided with the commonalities discussed with parents in the pre-survey interviews. The parents similarly mentioned that they either recognized their child's interest and talent in singing; that a friend or teacher lauded their child's talent; or that a friend or person outside of their family encouraged them enroll in chorus. The themes also capture similar findings to those of Kennedy (2009) found that people were drawn to the chorus for the sole purpose, to sing for the joy of singing. Kennedy (2009) states, "singing for the sheer joy of singing is surely one of the aims of all choral programmes [sic]" (p.197). One of the responses stated, "The reasons you list are all wonderful, but the truth is very simple. She likes to sing. She understands music and it brings her joy.". As the response suggests, a parent's decision to enroll their child can be distilled into a straightforward and simple reason – their child likes to sing, and it brings them joy.

What if any differences exist among musician and non-musician parents?

The small sample size presented some difficulty for the analysis of these groups. The small number of musician parents rendered a chi-square analysis unfeasible. Initially, the reports of the t-tests using an unadjusted α of .05 indicated that musician parents averaged significantly stronger agreement than non-musician parents regarding the SCC goal, 'music education and performance experiences are essential to the development of a high personal standard of excellence' ($p = 0.048$). Also, t-test of the ranking of the goals revealed that non-musician parents on average ranked the goal, 'a choral organization is a community of individuals that feel they are valued and work together toward a purpose' significantly higher ($p = 0.024$). For this

difference in the ranking of the goals, I am unable to arrive at a reasonable justification as to why non-musician parents have placed higher priority on this goal as opposed to musician parents. Among the other stated goals that had lower priority, they all highlight aesthetic experiences over technical ones. I may have expected that musician parents would favor more goals that are aimed at achieving a higher level of technical proficiency, however evidence to support this is lacking. These results were noted as they approached significance prior to correction.

Though the t-test analysis looked for significant differences, some information is gained as we learn that these groupings were not different and in fact slightly similar. To restate, the SCC goal that received most agreement and ranked highest was, 'I want my child to experience the power and joy of singing' (97%). In this way, it may suggest that the musician parents in this sample value the power and joy of singing the same as non-musician parents. Again, a biased perspective may be that musician parents would favor or find more agreeableness with goals that favored greater technical proficiency. Perhaps the most technical SCC objective was 'music education and performance experiences are essential to the development of a high personal standard of excellence' (80%) which was ranked 3rd. Prior to Bonferroni correction, this was also the goal that achieved a significantly different result receiving on average stronger agreement by musician parents. Despite the loss of significance on the differences between these two groups, I propose that this notion can be used to inform future research to explore any marked differences that may exist.

Limitations

This research was limited to only one community children's chorus organization. The goals used for the agreement items were limited to the statements listed under the SCC's artistic statement:

- High quality choral music should be accessible to everyone.
- All children can and should experience the power and joy of singing.
- Music education and performance experiences are essential to the development of a high personal standard of excellence.
- The chorus experience develops strong character and builds community leaders through self-discipline, confidence, commitment, teamwork, and respect for others.
- A choral organization is a community of individuals that feel they are valued and work together toward a purpose. Through this kind of community, we feel connected with others, physically and emotionally.

Other community children's choruses may have common or similarly stated goals, however these goals are specific to SCC and therefore the results of this study cannot be generalized. A more nuanced understanding of what influenced parent's decision to roll was limited to the optional free response item.

On account that a purposive sample of parents was recruited to participate in this study using SCC's current parent roster, it can be considered that parents responses may have been affected by social desirability bias. It would seem unlikely that parents of choristers currently enrolled in the chorus would report an overall disagreement with the organization's goals. Despite having the statement, 'your participation in this study will not have a negative or a

positive effect on your relationship or your child's relationship with the [Singmore Children's Chorus]' listed in the recruitment email and beginning of the survey, if parents did disagree with many of the goals, they may have opted to respond in a more favorable way than a more truthful one due to their association with the chorus.

This research was carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic which impacted the research process in many ways. Parents' attitudes may have been affected as almost half of the respondents enrolled their child in chorus either just before the pandemic or during. During this time, people have been inundated with online forms and surveys and undoubtedly have experienced screen fatigue affecting the response rate of this survey.

Due to the inextricable relationship between race and socioeconomic status and other factors, the perspectives of the parents presented in this research may be considered as limited due to its current demographic profile. SCC has acknowledged the problematic nature of its current demographic profile which is dissimilar to that of the area in which it is based. It is an issue being tackled by the organization's administration. Similar organizations should consider examining their operations in order to eliminate systems that perpetuate exclusivity and discourage diversity. Efforts should be made to attract and recruit a wider array of families.

This research was gravely limited by its small sample size which impacted my ability to conduct a more robust and sophisticated statistical analysis. Within this already small sample size, the limitations extended to the demographic profile of the respondents.

Implications for music teaching and learning

Parent participants in this study indicated general agreement with the community children's chorus' stated goals. Parents indicated that the goal, 'I want my child to experience the power and joy of singing' was the most important of the stated goals, receiving a 97% agreement

score. Of the NCAS artistic processes, performing (85%) received the highest agreement score with a moderate level of consensus followed by connecting (73%), and responding (73%), both with fair level of consensus. Composing/creating (42%) received the lowest agreement score but also had least consensus.

While Sichivitsa (2007) and Rubie-Davies et al. (2010) have provided perspectives from choral educators and Bartolome (2013) has increased our understanding on the experiences of students in a choral ensemble, this research contributes to the scarcity of information on parents' perspectives. Choral educators and administrators of community children's choruses should consider the role their play in their community and how to best serve the community. Rao (1993) highlighted the rise in children's choruses in response to the demise of music education programs in schools. It brought about a momentum and energy that gave purpose and direction to emerging community children's choruses. I implore choral educators to consider how their programs can be redesigned and revitalized by expanding the types of opportunities offered in a community children's chorus that optimize musical enjoyment and self-growth. The implications of incorporating more diverse experiences alongside informed perspectives from parents are far reaching and supports Doreen Rao's long-standing vision that, "choral singing must return to the heart of American music education" (1993, p.48). I hypothesize that as community children's choruses continuously seek understand and align their goals with the perspectives and expectations of parents, the outcomes would result in the creation of esteemed and coveted choral experiences with increased retention rates, and increased enjoyment and passion for singing.

Future research

This study adds to the dearth of information surrounding the unique perspectives of parents on a community children's chorus. It warrants future research to be carried out to further explore parents' perspectives in meaningful ways to further acknowledge significant role parents play in community children's choruses and by extension adjacent to any community children's ensemble.

Suggested methodologies for future research methodologies include ethnographies, case studies or focus groups that would allow researchers to further contribute to our understanding of parent perspectives in a more nuanced way. Considering that choral educators, as musicians, may be bias in their view on what parents may seek from a choral experience for the child(ren), prospective studies may aim to continue the investigation on whether differences exist between musician parents and non-musician parents. Other prospective research questions may seek to provide answers to: What factors influence retention in a community chorus? What do parents view as the perceived benefits of the choral experience? Are there differences in parent perspectives or expectations based on their level of education?

Given the detailed description of the organization, some of the results and information may be useful to similar organization or for future choral organizations seeking to employ innovative and reimagined concepts of what a community children's chorus can entail.

Based on the limitations of this study, future research would largely benefit from gaining perspectives from a more widely representative and diverse sample of parents. Researchers should also aim to obtain significant sample sizes in order to employ more statistical analyses.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into parent perspectives of a community children's chorus. My research questions were:

1. What are the publicly stated goals and expected outcomes of a community children's chorus organization?
2. Do parents' perspectives align with the chorus' publicly stated goals and expected outcomes?
3. Do parents' perspectives align with the four artistic processes of the National Core Arts Standards?
4. What are some of the more important experiences that parents value of their child(ren)'s experience in a community children's chorus?
5. What if any differences exist among musician and non-musician parents?

In order to investigate these questions, I surveyed the parents of choristers enrolled in a community children's chorus, Singmore Children's Chorus. The survey was developed using the publicly stated goals from the artistic vision statement listed on SCC's website. The survey investigated the level of agreement or disagreement with the stated goals of SCC as well as the four artistic processes of National Core Arts Standards.

Parent participants in this study indicated an overall agreement with the majority of SCC's stated goals. From parents' perspective the goal, 'I want my child to experience the power and joy of singing' received the highest ranking and the highest agreement score (97%). Of the NCAS artistic processes, parents indicated most agreement with statements pertaining to performing (85%), by connecting (73%), responding (73%), and composing/creating (42%).

In addition to the alignment of parent perspectives with SCC goals and NCAS artistic processes, analysis of the free responses revealed a common theme that influenced parents' decision to enroll their child(ren) in a community children's chorus; they recognized their 'child's interest or passion for singing'. Parents' responses indicate an alignment of their perspectives with those of Logsdon (2013) and Sugden (2005) who advocate for aesthetic experiences based solely on its intrinsic value and not for any external benefit – art for the sake of art. In other words, it can be expected that a choral experience, a musical experience, or any artistic experience is simply sought after for nothing other than having an aesthetic experience.

Considerable amounts of research in music teaching and learning explore the role of music in schools, universities and other clearly defined academic settings but I argue that there is room for expansion in community organizations that are not bounded by rigorous academic standards and curricula. Future research can continue to investigate the role of community chorus ensembles as well as community instrumental ensembles. In music education and teaching we have been diligent in exploring the role of music in schools, universities and academic settings but I argue continued exploration of community ensembles and parent perspectives is warranted and can help expand the reach of music education experiences.

Appendix A

Research Survey

Parent perspectives of a community children's chorus

This research is being conducted by Darren Shillingford, a graduate student in the Music Education Division at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a parent of a chorister currently enrolled in the [Singmore Children's Chorus].

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into parent perspectives of a community children's chorus. I am particularly interested in reasons that led you to enroll your child(ren) in the [Singmore Children's Chorus] as well as the importance of each of these reasons. The benefits of this study will be to produce new knowledge to the field of music education surrounding community choral ensembles by providing perspectives on the priorities and expectations of parents as well as the alignment of these priorities and expectations between parents and educators.

This survey will take approximately 11 minutes to complete. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and your answers will be kept completely anonymous. No personally identifiable information will be collected from you and your contact information will not be connected to your responses. You are able to skip any question that you do not wish to answer. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. Your participation in this study will not have a negative or a positive effect on your relationship or your child's relationship with the [Singmore Children's Chorus].

The data collected from this survey will be kept on a password protected hard drive with access limited to the researcher (Darren Shillingford), the research advisor (Dr. Stephanie Prichard) and the Music Education Department Chair (Dr. Ken Elpus).

By selecting "I agree" at the bottom of this page, you indicate your consent to participate.

If you have any questions or concerns about this questionnaire or this study in general, please do not hesitate to contact Darren Shillingford (dshil@umd.edu) or Dr. Stephanie Prichard (sfp@umd.edu)

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact:

University of Maryland College Park

Institutional Review Board Office

1204 Marie Mount Hall

College Park, Maryland, 20742

E-mail: irb@umd.edu

Telephone: 301-405-0678

For more information regarding participant rights, please visit: <https://research.umd.edu/irb-research-participants>. This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects. IRBNet package number

1747140-1 ELECTRONIC CONSENT: By clicking "I agree" you indicate that you are at least 18 years old, you have read this consent form, or had it read to you; your questions answered, and you voluntarily agree to participate in this survey. Please select your choice below. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records.

- ☐ I agree
- ☐ I do not want to participate.

Page Break

The following questions are asking about your initial motivations for enrolling your child(ren) in the [Singmore Children's Chorus (SCC)]

When I first enrolled my child(ren) in [SCC], I did so because it makes high quality music accessible to everyone.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

When I first enrolled my child(ren) in [SCC], I did so because I want my child to experience the power and joy of singing.

- ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Somewhat agree
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree
-

When I first enrolled my child(ren) in [SCC], I did so because music education and performance experiences are essential to the development of a high personal standard of excellence.

- ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Somewhat agree
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree
-

When I first enrolled my child(ren) in [SCC], I did so because the chorus experience develops strong character and builds community leaders through self-discipline, confidence, commitment,

teamwork, and respect for others.

- ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Somewhat agree
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree
-

When I first enrolled my child(ren) in [SCC], I did so because a choral organization is a community of individuals that feel they are valued and work together toward a purpose.

- ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Somewhat agree
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree
-

When I first enrolled my child(ren) in [SCC], I did so because through this kind of community, we feel connected with others, physically and emotionally.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

Page Break



Please rank the statements by the level of importance (1 = most important) based your initial motivations to enroll your child(ren)'s at the [Singmore Children's Chorus]. Only statements with which you agreed on the previous page are included below.

- _____ I did so because it made high quality music accessible to everyone.
- _____ I did so because I want my child to experience the power and joy of singing.
- _____ I did so because music education and performance experiences are essential to the development of a high personal standard of excellence.
- _____ I did so because the chorus experience develops strong character and builds community leaders through self-discipline, confidence, commitment, teamwork, and respect for others.
- _____ I did so because a choral organization is a community of individuals that feel they are valued and work together toward a purpose.
- _____ I did so because through this kind of community, we feel connected with others, physically and emotionally.

Page Break

Are there any other reasons not previously mentioned that influenced your decision to enroll your child(ren) in the [Singmore Children's Chorus]?

Page Break

The National Core Arts Standards is a framework that guides educators in providing a unified quality arts education for students. The framework intends to cultivate a student's ability to carry out four artistic processes: Performing, Creating, Responding, and Connecting.

The following questions continue to ask about your initial expectations from enrolling your child(ren) in the [Singmore Children's Chorus (SCC)] with regard to these four artistic processes.

Performing -- When I first enrolled my child(ren) in [SCC], I did so because I expected the program to teach them how to...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Perform music expressively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Perform music with technical accuracy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Perform a varied repertoire of music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Creating/Composing -- When I first enrolled my child(ren) in [SCC], I did so because I expected the program to teach them how to...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Compose new/original work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Arrange a musical work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improvise musical ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Responding -- When I first enrolled my child(ren) in [SCC], I did so because I expected the program to teach them how to...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Understand the elements of music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Analyze the context (social, cultural, and historical) of music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Evaluate the quality of music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Connecting -- I enrolled my child(ren) in chorus because I expected the program to teach them how to...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Connect personal interests to music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relate music to daily life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understand relationships between music and other arts and disciplines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break



Please rank the statements by the level of importance (1 = most important) based your initial motivations to enroll your child(ren)'s at the [Singmore Children's Chorus]. Only statements with which you agreed on the previous page are included below.

I expected the program to teach them how to...

- ☐ Perform music expressively
- ☐ Perform music with technical accuracy
- ☐ Perform a varied repertoire of music
- ☐ Compose new/original work
- ☐ Arrange a musical work
- ☐ Improvise musical ideas
- ☐ Understand the elements of music
- ☐ Analyze the context (social, cultural, and historical) of music
- ☐ Evaluate the quality of music
- ☐ Connect personal interests to music
- ☐ Relate music to daily life
- ☐ Understand relationships between music and other arts and disciplines.

Page Break

Are there any other important objectives not previously mentioned that you wish were included in your child(ren)'s choral experience at [SCC]?

Page Break

These final few questions are about you.

Do you consider yourself to be a musician?

- ☐ Yes, professional musician
- ☐ Yes, amateur musician
- ☐ No

What, if any, are your musical experiences within the past three years? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Participating in a music ensemble
- ☐ Self-taught learning experiences
- ☐ Private lessons
- ☐ Attending live music concerts
- ☐ Other (please specify)

How many of your children are enrolled or have been enrolled in the past at the [Singmore Children's Chorus]?

▼ 1 ... 3+

JS

In what year did you first enroll your child(ren) in [SCC]

▼ 2021 ... 1995

Page Break

Demographic information

Select the role that best describes your relationship to your child(ren)

☐ Parent

☐ Guardian

☐ Other (please specify) _____

What is your gender?

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Non-binary / third gender

☐ Prefer not to say

What is your race/ethnicity? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ American Indian and Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Two or more races
- ☐ Hispanic or Latinx
- ☐ Prefer not to say

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

▼ Less than high school ... Prefer not to say

End of Block: Default Question Block

Appendix B

Recruitment Email

From: Darren Shillingford <dshil@umd.edu>

Subject: Parent Survey

To: <[SCC] Parent Roster>

Dear [SCC] Parent,

I am currently working on some research in order to fulfill my graduate thesis in Music Education at the University of Maryland, College Park. I would like to invite you to participate in this survey regarding parent perspectives of a community children's chorus. The survey should take approximately 11 minutes to complete. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and your answers will be kept completely anonymous. Your participation in this study will not have a negative or a positive effect on your relationship or your child's relationship with the [Singmore Children's Chorus].

Survey Link - https://umdsurvey.umd.edu/jfe/form/SV_6YeykTVx8yyeXlk

Your response is critical to this study, and I hope you will be willing and able to participate. Thank you for your consideration of my request. Please feel free to contact me with any question at this email address.

Thank you,

Darren Shillingford

University of Maryland School of Music, Music Education Division

dshil@umd.edu

Appendix C

Participant responses to: “Are there any other reasons not previously mentioned that influenced your decision to enroll your child(ren) in the [Singmore Children’s Chorus]?”

Response no.	Statement	Theme
1.	Desire to help our child explore self-identified talents and interests.	Child’s interest or passion for singing
2.	I feel that our son has a beautiful voice and is interested in music. A good quality choral group is an excellent way to share this talent and improve.	Child’s interest or passion for singing
3.	I know that a music education is vital to the growth and understanding of all academic subjects. Also, my daughter wanted to sing, is good at it, and this is the place to go if she were serious.	Child’s interest or passion for singing
4.	He loves to sing and we wanted him to be in a supportive environment to teach him and allow him to sing more.	Child’s interest or passion for singing
5.	My daughter just really liked to sing and this seemed like a great opportunity for her to develop this skill and also an outlet for this passion.	Child’s interest or passion for singing
6.	The number one reason I enrolled my son is because he loved to sing and I want him to be happy and to enjoy and share his passion for music.	Child’s interest or passion for singing
7.	for child to experience singing in a large group and further develop a love of music	Child’s interest or passion for singing
8.	I enrolled my child primarily at her request and because she was interested in singing. The education has been a fantastic part of the experience but was not per se part of the original decision to enroll.	Child’s interest or passion for singing

9.	<p>The main reason we joined was because of the motivation and initiative that our child. I did not know anything about [SCC], or chorus, or imagine all the incredible benefits of being in [SCC] you listed. We strongly agree that our child has gain confidence, community, self-discipline, and joy from participation. We would answer "strongly agree," if the questions were phrased based on what we value after participating. My answer of "neither agree nor disagree," relates to the word "when you first decided." Our initial reason for joining was to support our child's initiative. But, we are VERY happy to witness so many other benefits for our child, and we strongly agree that these are the reasons we continue. I am curious to know if you are trying to assess what parents value from [SCC] participation based on [SCC] experience, or what parents were seeking years ago when they first contacted [SCC], or both. I hope you are very successful in your music education studies.</p>	<p>Child's interest or passion for singing</p>
10.	<p>It was a child's interest driven decision. Child from a young age showed signs of being very musical and loves to sing. [SCC] was chosen because of the high quality of its programming. Staying with it because child loves it.</p>	<p>Child's interest or passion for singing</p> <p>Reputation and Opportunities</p>
11.	<p>Because she already had a lifelong love of singing and making music.</p>	<p>Child's interest or passion for singing</p>
12.	<p>My child loves to sing and would be singing at home most of the time.</p>	<p>Child's interest or passion for singing</p>
13.	<p>Because my chorister loves to sing and has a good voice and potential.</p> <p>For my chorister and family to form community connections beyond school.</p>	<p>Child's interest or passion for singing</p>

		Form meaningful connections
14.	We enrolled our child because he found out about the chorus and decided he really wanted to be a part of it. It was his motivation that motivated us to help him to audition and enroll.	Child's interest or passion for singing
15.	It was primarily driven by his desire to sing in a chorus. As a family, we do not have a lot of music experience.	Child's interest or passion for singing
16.	My son likes to sing and asked to join a higher level chorus than what he was experiencing in school	Child's interest or passion for singing
17.	I enrolled my child at [SCC] simply because she loves to sing and [SCC] seemed like a place she would like. Her previous choirs had choristers that did not take singing seriously and she wanted to be with like-minded choristers.	Child's interest or passion for singing
18.	I enrolled my daughter because she liked to sing and I wanted to have a place/group where she could sing.	Child's interest or passion for singing
19.	He likes to sing	Child's interest or passion for singing
20.	Our initial motivation to seek out a choral experience was our child's love of singing. Our research identified [SCC] as the leading chorus in our area that fostered a love of singing and would provide the opportunity to experience artistic excellence and be a part of performance opportunities with others who shared her passion.	Child's interest or passion for singing
21.	The reasons you list are all wonderful, but the truth is very simple. She likes to sing. She understands music and it brings her joy. I wanted her to develop that love of music into something she can use and enjoy throughout her life. I know choral groups are good developmentally, but at their core, each vocalist has a gift, just like baseball	Child's interest or passion for singing

	<p>players like to play baseball, or dancers like to move across the stage. The benefits of the group education rely on that individual member's interest and commitment to the craft, and as a parent, I work hard to find the group activities my children are interested in.</p>	
22.	guidance from our daughter's music teacher	External influence
23.	Encouragement from a neighbor who was a member.	External influence
24.	Her vocal teacher recommended supplementing her vocal training with choral support.	External influence
25.	A friend had one of their children enrolled in the chorus. Knowing this helped us choose among the options available to us in our area.	External influence
26.	As I was looking for a chorus for my son to sing in, I was not only looking for a chorus with reputation for excellent music, but I also had to consider location (since commuting in this area is difficult) and time/day of rehearsals. This chorus seemed much more professionally run than some other choruses we found. Also, the daughter of one of my friends sings with [SCC]. She invited me to an event and we were impressed with the singers—and I thought it would be nice for our children to do something together.	<p>External influence</p> <p>Reputation and Opportunities</p>
27.	My child had to choose between choir or continuing band and orchestra at school. We moved to the area in October and my daughter didn't know anyone. I hoped she could make friends in the choir. I've been disappointed that there hasn't been room for that.	Form meaningful connections
28.	I really wanted my kids to have a formal music education but having spent years practicing two instruments I no	Form meaningful connections

	longer play, much of which felt like a chore, aside from symphony, I was seeking something more fun, more communal, more lasting, and with a lower barrier to entry. One of my daughters--the one who stuck with chorus--now also plays piano and has joined another, more socially activist chorus as well. So [SCC] is wonderful and has also been a great entry for her into music education and participation.	Music education
29.	High quality and rigorous music education.	Music education
30.	High quality musicianship	Music education
31.	a good preparation to later learn how to play an instrument	Music education
32.	The previous questions could not be answered. I chose [SCC] to further my child's singing experience and education	Music education
33.	There are a limited number of children's choruses in [state]. This one took music training seriously, had interesting performance opportunities and the location was accessible for us.	Music Education Reputation and Opportunities
34.	It is a premier group with a solid reputation. It also offers exposure beyond [state] and I like the international aspect, as well.	Reputation and Opportunities
35.	High quality performance opportunities	Reputation and Opportunities
36.	Because my child is not finding a lot of fellow students in her public school who really want to make high caliber vocal music. Also we chose it for the instruction, and for the ability to perform in interesting venues.	Reputation and Opportunities

37.	Similar chorus experience not available in public school. School has a chorus but large and not a lot of individual attention for kids who want to learn about the art of singing.	Reputation and Opportunities
38.	It's an amazing program & we r new to [SCC] but our experience has by far been just nothing but extraordinary. Thank u	Reputation and Opportunities
39.	I have always sought music enrichment and education for my children, outside of what is provided at school. I had heard about [SCC] and wanted to give it a try. Also, I love singing (I myself am not a good singer) but enjoy listening to acapella, and thinking comfort and grace with singing a beautiful thing.	Seeking enrichment outside of school
40.	Looking for a non-school based activity for a child who struggles in the school environment	Seeking enrichment outside of school

Appendix D

Participant responses to: “Are there any other important objectives not previously mentioned that you wish were included in your child(ren)'s choral experience at [SCC]?”

Response no.	Statement
1.	Some more time for children to build relationships and a community. My son had no friends this year.
2.	Children of this age need to connect with their teachers. There seems to be little emphasis in [SCC] in having the children / teachers connect with their students. This has probably made the experience less fulfilling for them.
3.	[SCC] has met and exceeded every expectation. I did not know much about the value of being in a chorus prior to my child's experience.
4.	Not seeing much in the way of creating/composing but it would be exciting to see this explored. More development of each individual singer (i.e., help them figure out who they are as a singer) would be nice to see too.
5.	I wish they had some free time to get to know each other
6.	We are very happy that our child has the opportunity to be a part of a group that expects and achieves excellence in an area that he truly enjoys and that contributes to his sense of well-being and happiness.
7.	We are very happy that our child has the opportunity to be a part of a group that expects and achieves excellence in an area that he truly enjoys and that contributes to his sense of well-being and happiness.
8.	I wanted my child to meet peers with similar interests. My son was (and still is) interested in singing, but there was no one else really in his peer group with the same interest. This was an important objective: the connections to others through music.
9.	I wanted her to have fun making music with others

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